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Low-Keyed Rep. Hamilton Expected to Head Intelligence Panel

Quiet Official on Way to Key Post

By ROBERT C. TOTH,
Times Staff Writer

JEFFERSONVILLE, Ind. — Barring an election upset, one of the most powerful men in the new Congress will be one whom hardly anyone has ever heard of: Rep. Lee H. Hamilton, a low-keyed Democrat from southeast Indiana who will become chairman of the House Intelligence Committee.

Hamilton's low profile is no accident. For example, he waited until this year, his 20th in Washington, to call his first formal news conference, on economic policy, and he regularly turns down invitations to television network news programs.

Nevertheless, despite being a Democrat from a Republican state, Hamilton remains enormously popular in his district, where he has a reputation as an effective moderate. In fact, a local Republican politician in his district regularly runs on his coattails, reminding voters that "Lee Hamilton and I were elected the same year."

In Congress, Hamilton has played the moderator between liberals and conservatives not only on the Intelligence Committee but also as the second-ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Human Rights Cited

On Central America, he helped fashion the compromise that preserved U.S. aid to El Salvador contingent upon improvements in human rights, but at the same time he helped lead the Democratic fight to stop covert aid to the rightist Nicaraguan rebels, or *contras*, until at least February.

Hamilton, who will become only the second chairman of the Intelligence Committee since its creation six years ago, has prepared an ambitious agenda. It includes reviews of presidentially ordered covert activities around the world, which have ranged from supporting the *contras* in Nicaragua to financing moderate politicians in Africa.



Rep. Lee H. Hamilton

"All covert actions need to be reviewed and rationalized (justified)," he said in an interview here. About a dozen covert actions are now being conducted, intelligence sources say.

The Democratic-controlled House committee, which has seemed more determined to play its watchdog role recently than has its Republican-led Senate counterpart, will also "look into the quality and cost-effectiveness of the intelligence product," Hamilton said. The nation's intelligence budget reportedly totals \$10 billion a year.

Hamilton listed several controversial issues that he wants to probe, including:

— "How the *contras* are funded now." There have been unconfirmed reports that, to circumvent the congressional ban on U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan rebels, sympathetic armed forces of other Central American nations are funneling some of their U.S.-provided material to the *contras*.

— "Whether CIA funds are used to circumvent" the government's foreign military sales program, which is run by the Defense Department. Two helicopters have been provided to El Salvador in this way, he said, and "I want to know how extensive this is, and why we do it that way at all."

— "How extensively U.S. military forces operate clandestinely abroad." U.S. special forces units took part in the invasion of Grenada last year, and elite groups trained in hostage rescue techniques have reportedly been sent overseas in other situations.

Back home, Hamilton feels little pressure from his district to probe alleged CIA excesses. There are hardly any liberals, except among Indiana University students in Bloomington.

"A political science professor followed me around for a week during a campaign," Hamilton mused recently during a swing across his sprawling district. "He said he hadn't heard a single liberal question from anyone in my audiences."

"We're either conservatives or moderates out here," he said with a smile, looking almost boyish in a graying crew cut that he has worn since he was an Evansville high school basketball star in 1948.

Hamilton grew up in a deeply religious home—his father and brother are Methodist ministers—and a staunchly Republican one. But he was turned off by the communist witch-hunting tactics of Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, the Wisconsin Republican and, as a lawyer from Columbus, Ind., entered Democratic politics supporting John F. Kennedy for President in 1960.

Margins Above 60%

He was elected to the House in his first attempt, during the 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson landslide for the Democrats. His winning election margins since then have been consistently above 60%.

Despite Hamilton's interest in foreign policy, his constituents are more directly affected by farm subsidies and river dredgings. He owes his popularity in the district less to his national reputation than to his greater-than-usual attention to voters here. On average, he spends about one weekend out of two in the district.

Continued

He steadily built a reputation in Congress as a fair-minded, pragmatic, non-ideological, bland-to-dull Hoosier who worked hard and sought to be effective rather than visible.

This year's Almanac of American Politics calls Hamilton one of the few members of Congress "who is genuinely respected on all sides. . . . He is one of those relatively rare members who can sway a vote in committee or on the floor just because members of both parties respect his judgment and fairness."

This year he faces the same Republican challenger whom he beat 2 to 1 in 1982, Floyd Coates, a 40-year-old plastics manufacturer who calls Hamilton "a big spender on everything but defense . . . an Eastern-type liberal."

But even Hamilton's Republican victims later have good words for him. State Sen. Robert Garton, beaten for the House seat in 1968, said Hamilton has "native ability, intelligence, an analytical mind, and he's personable. It's a winning combination."

Indiana - 9th District

9 Lee H. Hamilton (D)

Of Nashville — Elected 1964

Born: April 20, 1931, Daytona Beach, Fla.

Education: DePauw U., B.A. 1952; Ind. U., J.D. 1956.

Occupation: Lawyer.

Family: Wife, Nancy Nelson; three children.

Religion: Methodist.

Political Career: No previous office.

Capitol Office: 2187 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-5315.



In Washington: A man who chooses his issues carefully and times his few speeches for maximum impact, Hamilton has a reservoir of respect few members can match. But he has been reluctant to take advantage of it, and he has never sought a broker's role in House politics.

Scornful of self-promotion, Hamilton approaches his job with unwavering earnestness. Every week he mails his constituents a newsletter notable because it lacks the traditional self-serving photos and features about the incumbent. Hamilton simply explains one issue each week and sets out the major arguments on each side. Sometimes he does not even express his own opinion.

This low-key style has evolved over nearly 20 years on Foreign Affairs, which Hamilton joined as a freshman in 1965, and on the Europe and Middle East Subcommittee, which he chairs. He is one of a handful of members who have made the once-passive Foreign Affairs Committee closer in stature to its traditionally dominant Senate counterpart. Now third in line on Foreign Affairs behind two Democrats who are both more than a decade older, Hamilton seems almost certain to inherit the committee at some point in the 1980s.

In 1972 Hamilton sponsored the first end-the-Vietnam-War measure ever adopted by the Foreign Affairs Committee. His amendment to a foreign aid bill called for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam, contingent on release of all prisoners of war and agreement with North Vietnam on a cease-fire plan. The amendment was killed on the House floor in August 1972, but it helped set the stage for later congressional actions to end the war.

Hamilton frequently writes letters to top administration officials demanding explanations of policy decisions, and publishes their responses in the *Congressional Record*. He forces the State Department to brief him regularly on developments in the Middle East.

When the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979 forced Congress to approve a new \$4.8 billion American aid package, Hamilton managed it on the House floor and won its approval, calling it "a bargain for the United States."

As subcommittee chairman, he has sought to steer a middle course between the panel's militant pro-Israel faction and those who want to pay serious attention to Arab and Palestinian demands. In the 97th Congress, Hamilton sharply criticized Israeli handling of the raids on Palestinian camps in Lebanon. But he also was one of the more skeptical members in his approach toward Reagan administration plans for new arms sales to Jordan.

In his subcommittee's sensitive debates over aid to Greece and Turkey, Hamilton played what amounted to a referee's role. He was willing to back increased arms sales to Turkey, but insisted on imposing conditions and considering arms for Greece at the same time.

Hamilton began to build his favorable reputation early in his House career, winning election in 1965 as president of the freshman Democratic class in the 89th Congress. Later the same year, Hamilton received widespread press attention with a letter to President Johnson saying it was "time to pause" in action on Great Society social programs.

That strain of domestic conservatism has shown up in his budget voting of the last few years. Skeptical of the deficit levels the House Budget Committee has endorsed, he has sometimes voted against the committee's resolutions on final passage, taking most of the Indiana Democratic delegation with him. In 1981 he backed the Democratic leadership in voting against President Reagan's budget.

Much of Hamilton's time in recent years

Lee H. Hamilton, D-Ind.

Indiana 9

This is the largest and least urbanized district in the state. The hilly forests and farm lands are more akin to Kentucky and parts of southern Ohio and Illinois than to the flat Hoosier farm lands farther north. Many of those who settled here came from the South and brought with them their Democratic allegiances.

Poultry and cattle are the major agricultural commodities of the area, which is also the center of some of the nation's finest and most abundant limestone quarries. Stone cutters, like those portrayed in the movie "Breaking Away," regularly excavate rock that is used for building material throughout the country.

The Indiana suburbs of Louisville, Ky., along the Ohio River, make up the district's largest concentration of voters. Centered on New Albany, the district's largest city with just 37,000 people, this area is experiencing a minor population boom. With the counties along the Ohio River leading the way, the 9th grew faster in the 1970s than all but one district in the state.

Southeast — Bloomington; New Albany

In the days of the steamboats, when Indiana's economy depended upon the cargoes that came up the Ohio River, New Albany was the state's largest city. Although the river's contribution to the local livelihood has dropped off considerably in the last hundred years, the 9th District still depends upon river traffic and industries located along the river bank for many of its jobs.

In its northwest corner, the 9th takes in most of Bloomington, the home of Indiana University. The district boundary runs along 3rd Street in Bloomington, placing the northern two-thirds of the city's 52,000 residents in the 9th. Included in that area is all of Indiana University's campus as well as most of the off-campus housing and faculty neighborhoods.

Population: 544,873. White 530,291 (97%), Black 10,205 (2%). Spanish origin 3,180 (1%). 18 and over 383,018 (70%), 65 and over 56,470 (10%). Median age: 28.

has been spent on ethics issues as a member of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. In 1977 he chaired a task force that recommended new rules limiting members' outside earned income and honoraria. Most of the recommendations were adopted by the House, although in 1981 the outside income limit was doubled, to 30 percent of a member's salary.

In the 96th Congress, Hamilton was the dominant Democrat on the ethics committee, performing many of the behind-the-scenes chores for its mercurial chairman, Charles E. Bennett, D-Fla.

Hamilton persuaded the panel to revise the ethics rules to clarify the differences among various punishments meted out in ethics cases. He worked on the committee's recommendation of censure for Michigan Democrat Charles C. Diggs Jr., convicted in a kickback scheme, and on the Abscam bribery investigations.

On Abscam, however, Hamilton broke with Bennett and most of the committee. The panel recommended that Rep. Michael "Ozzie" Myers, D-Pa., be expelled following his conviction in federal court for accepting bribes. The expulsion came to the floor on the day the House

was scheduled to recess for the 1980 election, and Hamilton said the rushed atmosphere was denying Myers due process. But the majority was on the other side, and Myers was expelled. Hamilton left the panel at the end of 1980.

At Home: The son and brother of ministers, Hamilton has a devotion to work that comes out of his traditional Methodist family. From his days in Evansville High School in 1948, when he helped propel the basketball team to the state finals, to his race for Congress in 1964, he displayed a quiet, consistent determination.

When he graduated from DePauw University in 1952, he received an award as the outstanding senior. He accepted a scholarship to Goethe University in Germany for further study.

Hamilton practiced law for a while in Chicago, but soon decided to settle in Columbus, Indiana, where his interest in politics led him into the local Democratic Party. In 1960 he was chairman of the Bartholomew County (Columbus) Citizens for Kennedy. Two years later he managed Birch Bayh's Senate campaign in Columbus.

He was the consensus choice of the local Democratic organization for the 9th District House nomination in 1964, and won the primary with 46 percent of the vote in a field of five candidates. He went on to defeat longtime Republican Rep. Earl Wilson, a crusty fiscal watchdog who had represented the district for almost a quarter of a century.

With his widespread personal respect, Hamilton has been re-elected easily ever since. After a few years, Republicans gave up on defeating him and added Democrats to his district to give GOP candidates a better chance

Indiana - 9th District

elsewhere in the state. In 1976, for the first time in the history of the district, the Republicans put up no candidate at all. In 1980, as Democrats were having trouble all over Indiana, Hamilton was drawing his usual percentage — nearly 65 percent of the vote.

Conceding that Hamilton was unbeatable, the Republican Legislature made no effort to weaken him in the 1981 redistricting, although they removed Hamilton's hometown of Columbus from the district. He switched his residence to the next county and was re-elected with 67 percent of the vote.

Committees

Foreign Affairs (3rd of 24 Democrats)
Europe and the Middle East (chairman); International Security and Scientific Affairs.

Select Intelligence (6th of 9 Democrats)
Oversight and Evaluation.

Joint Economic (vice chairman)
Economic Goals and Intergovernmental Policy (chairman); Monetary and Fiscal Policy.

Elections

1982 General

Lee H. Hamilton (D) 121,094 (67%)
Floyd Coates (R) 58,532 (32%)

1980 General

Lee H. Hamilton (D) 136,574 (64%)
George Meyers Jr. (R) 75,601 (36%)

Previous Winning Percentages: 1978 (66%) 1976 (100%)
1974 (71%) 1972 (63%) 1970 (63%) 1968 (54%)
1966 (54%) 1964 (54%)

District Vote For President

1980		1976	
D	92,931 (43%)	D	109,023 (52%)
R	112,568 (52%)	R	98,908 (47%)
I	8,747 (4%)		

Campaign Finance

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
1982			
Hamilton (D)	\$159,150	\$58,065 (36%)	\$177,607
Coates (R)	\$233,458	\$550 (.2%)	\$147,881
1980			
Hamilton (D)	\$113,260	\$33,532 (25%)	\$122,674

Voting Studies

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	\$	O	\$	O	\$	O
1982	47	52	66	33	58	42
1981	47	51	71	27	56	44

1980	74	25	67	31	48	47
1979	76	23	71	29	44	56
1978	86	14	74	26	33	67
1977	72	23	80	18	32	65
1976	33	67	72	27	43	55
1975	51	48	69	29	45	54
1974 (Ford)	65	35				
1974	70	26	65	32	39	55
1973	41	58	82	18	30	70
1972	68	30	71	28	35	63
1971	42	54	85	12	17	78
1970	68	23	74	21	23	73
1969	68	32	85	15	22	78
1968	82	15	77	18	27	65
1967	85	12	79	19	44	52
1966	82	10	75	15	32	51
1965	84	11	82	13	24	75

S = Support

O = Opposition

Key Votes

Reagan budget proposal (1981)	N
Legal services reauthorization (1981)	Y
Disapprove sale of AWACs planes to Saudi Arabia (1981)	Y
Index income taxes (1981)	N
Subsidize home mortgage rates (1982)	Y
Amend Constitution to require balanced budget (1982)	N
Delete MX funding (1982)	Y
Retain existing cap on congressional salaries (1982)	Y
Adopt nuclear freeze (1983)	Y

Interest Group Ratings

Year	ADA	ACA	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1982	70	30	80	45
1981	65	33	67	28
1980	44	46	47	76
1979	53	27	70	50
1978	35	31	50	35
1977	60	15	64	50
1976	50	11	52	32
1975	68	43	74	29
1974	65	7	70	50
1973	80	4	73	36
1972	50	26	82	10
1971	89	7	75	-
1970	80	13	67	22
1969	53	13	90	-
1968	58	22	75	-
1967	53	11	83	30
1966	47	33	85	-
1965	58	15	-	10